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SUBJECT: NDC GAINS ADDITIONAL SEAT IN PARLIAMENT

¶1. (SBU) Summary/Comment: The ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) won the Chereponi by-election September 29, taking a seat that had been held by the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP). By winning this Northern Ghana constituency, the NDC increased its majority in parliament to 116 seats out of 230, with the NPP now holding 107. While there was some pre-election violence between NPP and NDC supporters, voting took place among heavy security and voting occurred without disruption. However, party leaders have yet to demonstrate a willingness to seriously address the issue of violence among their grassroots activists. The Chereponi seat had been held by a female MP, and this election reduces women's representation in Parliament to 19. The ruling NDC is especially weak in terms of female representation, with only four women MPs out of 116. End Summary/Comment.

¶2. (U) The Chereponi by-election followed the death of NPP MP Doris Asibi Seidu in August 2009. The new MP is Samuel Abdulai Jabanyite, a teacher and social worker. He received 8,239 votes, representing 51.25% of the total votes cast, while Abubakar Aminu Gariba of the NPP recorded 7,416 votes, 46.13% of the votes. Voter turnout was 71.28%.

¶3. (U) There were several incidents of pre-election violence between supporters of the NDC and the NPP in some parts of the constituency, resulting in injuries. However, a heavy police and military presence limited further violence.

¶4. (SBU) NDC officials told us that they are pleased with the result. They described the pre-election violence as a provocation by the NPP. In contrast, NPP General Secretary Nana Ohene Ntow told us October 1 that NPP voters were deliberately intimidated by NDC thugs and prevented from freely casting their votes. Despite the defeat, he said the strong second place showing reinforces the fact that the NPP remains a major political force even in opposition. An official of the People's National Convention (PNC), which received only 1% of the votes, said that the two main parties have an overwhelming advantage in terms of access to resources, presenting a major challenge for small parties.

¶5. (U) The Chereponi seat had been held by a female MP, and this by-election reduces the number of women in Parliament to 19, six fewer than the number of women in the last parliament. While there had been pressure on the two main parties to select female candidates for this seat, neither party chose to do so. The ruling NDC is especially weak in terms of female representation, with only 4 women among its 116 MPs.

Furuta-Toy